

## Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CPR-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 DOTE-00

EB-07 FAA-00 CAB-02 ARAE-00 /058 W

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P 161650Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1407

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, PE

SUBJ: TRANSPORT MINISTER GARCIA VARGAS KILLED IN HELICOPTER CRASH

1. MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS ARTEMIO GARCIA VARGAS SUSTAINED A MASSIVE BRAIN CONCUSSION AUGUST 14 WHEN THE HELICOPTER IN WHICH HE WAS TRAVELING CRASHED UPON LANDING IN MOQUEGUA. GARCIA VARGAS DIED AT 11:30 P.M. AUGUST 14, 11 HOURS FOLLOWING THE CRASH. EFFORTS OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS FLOWN FROM LIMA FAILED AND THE MINISTER NEVER REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS. GARCIA VARGAS HAD BEEN RIDING WITH THE PILOT AND WAS THROWN THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD. HELICOPTER CREWMEMBERS AND OTHER PASSENGERS SUSTAINED MINOR INJURIES.

2. ON AUGUST 15 THE BODY WAS BROUGHT TO LIMA AND WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ, THE CABINET AND HIGH MILITARY OFFICIALS. FUNERAL AND BURIAL TAKING PLACE AUGUST 16.

3. GARCIA VARGAS WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE AUGUST 29, 1975 COUP WHICH BROUGHT MORALES BERMUDEZ TO POWER. AT THAT TIME HE WAS CHIEF OF THE SIXTH MOTORIZED DIVISION IN TACNA, FROM WHERE MORALES BERMUDEZ ISSUED HIS AUGUST 29 COMMUNIQUE. GARCIA VARGAS WAS CONSIDERED CLOSE TO MORALES BERMUDEZ AND WAS A REVOLUTIONARY MODERATE. HE MAINTAINED EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY AND SPECIFICALLY WITH AMBASSADOR DEAN. GARCIA VARGAS ALSO

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MAINTAINED CLOSE RELATIONS WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE

SOUTHERN PERU COPPER CORPORATION. SPCC, WHICH OPERATES IN TOQUEPALA, ILO, AND CUAJONE, SENT DOCTORS TO NEARBY MOQUEGUA UPON BEING NOTIFIED OF THE HELICOPTER CRASH.

4. GARCIA VARGAS HAD RECENTLY BEEN IN THE POLITICAL "HOT SEAT" SINCE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HANDLING THE CRISIS CAUSED BY THE JULY 1 MICROBUS STRIKE FELL TO HIM (LIMA 6190). GARCIA VARGAS WAS FIRM BUT OFFERED TO CARRY OUT A THOROUGH STUDY OF PROBLEMS FACING BOTH THE MICROBUS DRIVERS AND OVER-THE-ROAD TRANSPORT WORKERS. HIS DEATH REPRESENTS THE LOSS OF ONE OF MORALES BERMUDEZ' MOST LOYAL AND EFFECTIVE SUPPORTERS, AND HIS MODERATE COUNSEL WILL ALSO BE MISSED IN SUCH IMPORTANT AREAS AS THE MARCONA NEGOTIATIONS AND BI-LATERAL CIVIL AVIATION MATTERS.

5. NO SUCCESSOR HAS YET BEEN NAMED. PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ TOLD REPORTERS THAT, BEFORE THINKING OF A SUCCESSOR, HE WOULD FIRST BURY HIS FRIEND. BECAUSE OF THE TRAGIC ACCIDENT, PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ POSTPONED HIS SCHEDULED TRIP TO AREQUIPA FOR THE AUGUST 15 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE CITY'S FOUNDING IN 1540. THE GOP WAS REPRESENTED IN THE AREQUIPA CEREMONIES BY GENERAL JUAN SANCHEZ, COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE III MILITARY REGION. SMITH

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**TAGS:** PGOV, PINR, PE, (VARGAS, GARCIA)  
**To:** STATE  
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